

Valencia (Spain)

5.27 million inhabitants

SCHOOLFOOD 4CHANGE

SNAPSHOT

Organic production + biodiversity protection

GHG emission reduction

Nutrition, quality, taste, freshness, seasonality

Food education, food culture, + culinary traditions

Market Dialogues in Valencia Region for Better School Meals

What? To bring healthy, sustainable food into public institutions, including schools, while supporting local producers and regional food systems.

When? 2023 - 2024

Who? Schools!

"Embedding sustainability criteria into public procurement lays the foundation for healthier, more equitable school food."

The challenge?

In Valencia region, traditional procurement models were often rigid, distant from local realities, and difficult for small suppliers. Workshops revealed barriers like unfamiliarity with tendering rules and a mismatch between product availability and procurement specifications. These dialogues highlighted differing priorities for cost efficiency and a need for flexibility.

The solution!

Through SchoolFood4Change, Valencia pioneered a market dialogue uniting local farmers, canteen operators, and procurement officials. This dialogue built mutual understanding, mapped food flows, and identified shared priorities for future buying. Consequently the Region is moving towards a dynamic system that better accommodates seasonal, organic, and local produce.

The results:

The dialogue in Valencia led to a more flexible procurement approach, including the use of lots to enable smaller suppliers to participate and multi-criteria evaluation to balance cost with social and environmental values. This helped align procurement more closely with sustainability goals while creating clearer opportunities for local producers and SMEs. The approach is expected to increase the share of seasonal, local, and organic food in school canteens, benefiting schoolchildren, families, local businesses, and the public administration.

- **Economic impact:** Improved access to tenders for local producers and SMEs, supporting local jobs and keeping more economic value within the region.
- **Social impact (SROI):** Better school meals support healthier diets for children, while participatory food governance strengthens community involvement and social inclusion.
- **Environmental impact**: Greater use of seasonal and organic products supports more sustainable food production and shorter supply chains, while also encouraging better food waste management and circular economy practices.



Photo by Silvia Geers on Unsplash

Key Takeaways for Cities:

Bring all key stakeholders together—including producers, caterers, schools, and legal experts—to identify barriers and co-create practical solutions.

Involve legal and financial teams early to align procurement plans with administrative and budget requirements.

Make tenders accessible to smaller suppliers by using geographical or product-based lots, framework agreements, or rotating supplier pools.

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